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JOURNALISM IN PAKISTAN

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Foreword

Journalism in Pakistan covers the first twelve years of the Press in the territories now comprising Pakistan The story begins with the *Kurrachee Advertiser* sponsored by Sir Charles Napier in 1845 and ends with the failure of the 1857 Struggle for Independence that marked a turning point in the history of the sub continent The chapter on Newsletters serves as back ground to the emergence of the printed media and is mainly based on the author s earlier work *Newsletters in the Orient* published in the Netherlands for which he obtained a doctorate from the University of Amsterdam

For the study *Journalism in Pakistan* the author was awarded the DIPLOME a research degree by the UNESCO sponsored International Centre for Advanced Studies in Journalism, University of Strasbourg The international jury of journalism professors that examined him included Professor Jacques Leaute Chairman Faculty of Letters University of Strasbourg Professor Robert Desmond Faculty of Journalism University of California (U S A) and Professor M Kafel, Chairman, Faculty of Journalism, University of Warsaw (Poland)

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Newsletters

Dutiful sons that are acquainted with their father s temper do not write recommendations in behalf of Gazetteers and such sort of people Your request is granted and the man has been promoted accordingly but yet he has been dismissed from the office Do not commit the like offence again

—Letter of Emperor Aurangzeb Alamgir to his grandson Muhammad Muiz ud Din

FIVE thousand years back there flourished in the Indus Valley a great civilisation two main centres of which were Harappa about 100 miles south west of Lahore, and Mohenjo daro, nearly 200 miles north of Karachi The civilisation had certain intermittent outside contacts particularly with Sumer ' Overland there was occasional coming and going—the departure of an adventurous caravan to Turkestan to bring back lapis and turquoise, a foreign pin as a curiosity and tales of unrest and trouble around the far Caspian shores

From merchants and trade to writing is a reasonable enough transition Harappa had an essentially pictographic script, more mature than that of Mesopotamia because it employed only about 400 characters But this script has neither been read nor transliterated therefore we remain in the dark as to the contents of the inscriptions on the stamp seals discovered at the pre historic towns of Harappa and Mohenjo daro

The other evidence shows that there existed a state ruled over by priest kings wielding autocratic and absolute power from two main seats of government [1] According to Wheeler in essence the picture is one of a rigid and highly evolved bureaucratic machine capable of organizing and distributing surplus wealth and defending it but little conducive to the political liberty of the individual [2] And in the oriental lands some agency for the collection of intelligence secret or otherwise has been an essential feature of all despotic regimes Therefore it can safely be presumed that the highly evolved bureaucratic machine of the Indus Valley administration included a department for the collection of information

In the days of Chandragupta Mauriya (321 298 B C) whose empire included territories now forming Pakistan the intelligence organisation expanded under the personal direction of his

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Note —This chapter is mostly based on the author s own book *News letters in the Orient* published at Assen in the Netherlands in 1956

1 Stuart Piggott *Prehistroic India* (London 1952) The entire information given above is based on this book

2 Quoted ibid p 153

Prime Minister Kautilya There were three different sources from which news emanated independently. If the contents tallied with each other, the news was considered reliable, otherwise the defaulting spies were punished.[1]

Megasthanese and Arrian corroborate the statement[2] and the latter further says that it was "against use and wont" for the news-superintendents to give in a false report [3] According to a modern historian of journalism, King Asoka's administration had an elaborate news organisation [4]

The institution of newsletters was introduced in the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent by the Ghaznavide Muslim rulers (976-1186 A D) with Lahore as the seat of provincial government, who in their turn had learnt it from the Abbasides Under their aegis-men of eminence were appointed as news-writers and the collection of news was regarded as the "most important of all duties "[5]

During what is known as "the Sultanate of Delhi period" of the history of the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, the system of news-gathering was streamlined and made highly efficient Speed element became almost an obsession and from the account of Ibn Battuta who visited Sind in the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq, one learns that news travelled at the rate of nearly two hundred miles in twenty-four hours.[6] In the days of Ala-ud-Din Khalji, newsletters were used also for commercial information and the news organisation assisted the machinery of price control system by gathering information from three different sources and tallying them in order to maintain standards of accuracy [7] So far as the purpose of the news

1 *Kautilya's Arthashastra*, translated by Dr R Shamasastri (Mysore, 1929), p. 21

2. J W McCrindle, *Ancient India as Described by Megasthanese and Arrian* (Calcutta, 1926), pp 83-87

3 Ibid p 217

4 J Natarajan, *History of Indian Journalism* (Delhi, 1955), p 1

5 Abul Fazl Baihaki, *Sabuktagin*, translated by Elliot and Dowson, second reprint (Calcutta, 1952), p 65

6 *Travels of Ibn Battua*, edited by H A. R Gibb (London), p 183, *Cambridge History of India*, Vol III, p 129

7 Zia-ud-Din Barni, *Tarikh-i-Feroze Shahi*, translated by Elliot and Dowson, second reprint (Calcutta, 1953), p 114

organisation was concerned, it was not only to keep the central administration informed of the day to day developments in every walk of life but also to secure justice for the people We learn from Barni a contemporary historian, that the news writers 'were greatly feared by the nobles and officials and neither they nor their sons or dependents dared to distress any innocent persons [1]

Among the Mughal Emperors Akbar was the first to establish a news organisation very comprehensive in its scope Its objects were thus defined by Abul Fazl 'His Majesty s object is that every duty be properly performed that there be no undue increase or decrease in any department that dishonest people be removed, and trustworthy people be held in esteem and that active servants may work without fear, and negligent and forgetful men be held in check' [2]

In Jahangir s time most often in the provincial administra tion the duties of *bakhshi* (pay master of the army) and of news writers were combined in one person They were also awarded presents by the Emperors These two factors indicate a rise in the status and powers of news writers Among those who served in the territories now forming Pakistan were included Muhammad Raza Jabiri *bakhshi* and news writer of the Punjab Province [3] and Muhammad Shafi in the province of Multan [4] In the reign of Shahjahan Chandar Bhan Brahman the well known literary figure born at Lahore worked as a senior news writer at the royal court [5]

However of all the Mughal Emperors, Aurangzeb had the most efficient news organisation and his news writers rightly earned the epithet of the eyes and ears of the Emperor They were the main source of information in the largest ever Mughal dominion in the Indo Pakistan sub continent and they covered

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1 Zia ud Din op cit p 114

2 Abul Fazl *Ain i Akbari* translated by H Blochman (Calcutta 1873) p 250

3 Alexander Rogers *Memoirs of Jahangir* edited by H Beveridge (London 1909) Vol I p 300

4 Ibid Vol II p 191

5 Charles Rieu *The Catalogue of the Persian Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London 1879) Vol I p 397

news of great and significant developments [1]

The system in vogue under the Mughals could be summarised as follows.

"A number of news-writers were maintained in the Court, whose job was to prepare a daily record of all proceedings They covered almost every news, even the minutest detail of every important and unimportant happening at the Court. Next day the minutes were read aloud in the Court and the envoys of the rulers of subordinate states as well as of nobles stationed at long distances used to take down notes and send the same in the form of newsletters to their employers At the same time the Court newsletters were placed in the official archives for record.

"For the collection of news from all over the kingdom, a separate department existed under direct control of the Emperor. At the head of that was the Darogha Dak Chowki (Director, Postal Department), but he was not the chief of the news organisation. His job was to act as a postal agency alone for the conveyance of newsletters. The provincial and district news-writers were appointed, transferred and dismissed by the Emperor who received news in two ways Some newsletters were sealed to the effect that they were to be opened by the Emperor alone. Therefore, the Darogha used to present these without opening them. Secondly, there were newsletters on routine matters which the Darogha was entitled to open himself He prepared a summary of these but was also expected to submit the original letters, so that if the Emperor required details of any item on the summary he could refer to the original newsletter.

"On the basis of the information thus received, the Emperor issued orders and they were all incorporated in the Court newsletters and then placed in the state archives

"The contents of newsletters included political, social, economic, commercial and agricultural news besides information about military expeditions. The newsletters proved useful for

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1 Abdus Salam Khurshid, *Newsletters in the Orient* (Assen, 1956), p 55

the people in the sense that all injustices, instances of mal administration and oppressive actions of tyrannous governors and nobles were brought to the notice of the Emperor who took swift action to rectify all wrongs Thus it proved to be an agency for the ventilation of people s grievances which is one of the important functions of modern newspapers [1]

During the last one hundred years of the Mughal regime a number of independent states sprang up throughout the sub continent One of them was the Sikh state of the Punjab that comprised most of the territory now called West Pakistan The Sikh state had an efficient news organisation that covered not only the internal news but also the foreign intelligence The system was not much different from the one that had existed in the sub continent for the last few centuries In one respect there was a marked distinction that the newsletters were named like the modern newspapers There was *Punjab Akhbar* that covered news of the entire state The *Lahore Akhbar* gave news of Lahore region Similarly *Peshawar Akhbar, Dera Ismail Khan Akhbar Bahawalpur Akhbar* and *Kashmir Akhbar* contained news of the respective regions The newsletter known as *Hindustan Akhbar* was compiled by the news writer stationed in Delhi who prepared a summary of the news of Hindustan which is another name for India *Kabul Akhbar* was the name of the newsletter written by the Kabul correspondent of the Sikh state news organisation Besides there were correspondents at Multan Bannu Hazara and Tank who sent their despatches for inclusion in the respective regional newsletters Some of the newsletters were dailies like the *Punjab Akhbar Lahore Akhbar* and *Peshawar Akhbar* The others appeared weekly or bi weekly in accordance with the supply of news

These newsletters were extensively used by several English and Urdu papers throughout the sub continent This happened because the British on account of good relations with the Sikh state regularly secured copies of the original newsletters written in Persian translated them into English used them as a source of

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1 Abdus Salam Khurshid op cit , pp 82 83

intelligence of what happened in the Sikh dominion and in Afghanistan, and occasionally supplied the same to friendly newspapers in India [1]

1. Ganda Singh, *Punjab in 1839-40* (Amritsar, 1952) The entire information about the newsletters in the Sikh state of Punjab has been taken from this book,

2

The Earliest Newspaper

Don't expect me ever to be in good temper until I am in my coffin I never will it would be dishonest un gentlemanlike—unless I can kill an editor which would make me fat sleek good humoured

—*Sir Charles Napier*



AS in India, Burma and Ceylon printed newspapers made their debut in the territory now forming Pakistan in the wake of the British rule However, it seems paradoxical that the earliest newspaper in this region appeared from Karachi only a year or so after the annexation of Sind by the British in 1843 and not in what now forms the eastern wing of Pakistan where British hegemony had existed for about one hundred years Perhaps it was because Calcutta remained the hub of British administrative machinery in Bengal as well as in the rest of India for a considerable period and therefore Calcutta became the newspaper centre catering to the requirements of the entire province of Bengal Another cause may be that it was a coalition of British colonialism and Hindu financial interests that made the victory of Plassey possible[1] and ultimately led]to a deliberate policy of ignoring the interests of the eastern part of Bengal with an overwhelming majority of Muslim population

Kurrachee Advertiser, the first newspaper in this territory appeared in January 1845 from Karachi and attracted attention throughout the length and breadth of British India for its unscathing criticism of the Indian Press but the role played by this newspaper has to be studied in the perspective of the circumstances leading to the annexation of Sind by the British

Sind, now forming part of West Pakistan Province, had[2] successively acknowledged the sway of the Mughals, made submission to Persia under Nadir Shah and after his death owed allegiance for a time to Afghanistan Since the end of the eighteenth century Sind was ruled by the Talpur Amirs seated at Khairpur, Mirpur and Hyderabad In 1809 the British made a treaty with the Amirs securing an undertaking from them not to permit any settlement of the French in their territory In 1832 the Amirs reluctantly agreed that the rivers and roads of Sind should be open to the merchants and traders of Hindustan but that no armed vessels or military stores should pass through the country A few years later a very reluctant consent was

1 P E Roberts *History of British India* (Oxford 1952)

2 The entire background with the exception of a few facts is taken from Roberts book referred to above pp 325 32

exacted from them to the admission of a British Resident at Hyderabad.

When the Afghan War broke out, the Amirs were told that "while the present exigency lasts . . . the articles of the treaty prohibiting the use of the Indus for the conveyance of military stores must necessarily be suspended" In 1839 they were forced to sign a new treaty under the provisions of which they were required to pay three hundred thousand rupees a year for the maintenance of a British subsidiary force in their country.

During the crucial days of the Afghan War the Amirs kept their promises faithfully but they were charged of disaffection and instead of leaving the matter in the hands of James Outram, the British Resident at Hyderabad, who knew the Amirs, Sir Charles Napier was sent to Sind in 1842 with full civil and military powers This impulsive, hot-headed and extremely combative General did not seem to have any scruples for he writes in his diary:

> "We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so, and a very advantageous, useful, humane piece of rascality it will be. . . ."[1]

He refused to hear the voice of moderation on the part of James Outram, whose knowledge of Sind affairs was much greater than his, and within eleven months threw away all treaties with the Amirs, marched into their territories, waged a fierce aggressive war, sent the Amirs in exile and, by August 1843, Sind was annexed

The woeful tales of Sir Charles' atrocities, who had absolute powers of life and death without trial and did a good deal of hanging besides flogging freely, made him known among people as "Shaitan ka Bhai" (Devil's brother) On the other hand, Sir James Outram, in collaboration with the exiled Amirs, launched a regular Press campaign against Sir Charles Napier The leading newspaper that gave a tough battle to Sir Charles was the *Bombay Times*, edited by Dr Buist. The tone and content of the propaganda may be judged from the following article that

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1 Roberts, op cit, p 328

appeared in *Bombay Times*

Those who three months since were sharers of a palace, are now the degraded lemans of the Feringhi So it is the harem has been defiled, the last drop of bitterness has been mingled with the cup of misery we have given the Amirs to drink the worst of the insults Mohammadans can endure has been heaped upon their discrowned heads Let it not be supposed we speak of this in the language of prudish sentimentalism The officers who have dishonoured the zenana of kings have committed great wrong but for that as for the other evil deeds attending upon so unjust and cruel a conquest the Government which ordained it is responsible We know now, to our shame and sorrow, the evils which flowed from frailties such as this permitted in Cabool and at Hyderabad we may yet discover the heinousness of our sins in the magnitude of our punishment If one thing more than all the other wrongs we have inflicted on them, could awaken in the bosom of each Beloochee chief, the unquenchable thirst of never dying vengeance it must be to see the sanctities of domestic life invaded and violated as they have been—to see the daughters of nobles and wives of kings living while youth and beauty last as the concubines of the infidel thrown aside when those attractions have departed to perish in their degradation and shame This is the first of the black fruits of invasion for which Britons must blush We have avoided explicitness on such a subject our readers will be at no loss to discover our meaning The most attractive of the ladies of the zenana now share the tents of the British officers A series of acts of injustice first introduced to the Scindians the character of the British Government what has just been related will afford them an insight into the virtues and blessings they may look for from the advance of civilization the benefits and honours destined them by the most refined people of the world This contrasts well with the reception English ladies experienced at Afghan hands '[1]

The tone and contents of this article show a sympathy for

1 W F P Napier *The Conquest of Scinde* (London 1845) Vol II pp 413 14